

(3) those households often carry a higher energy burden than most United States households, spending up to 20 percent of their household income on home energy bills;

(4) States provided more than 4,000,000 households with LIHEAP assistance in 2002;

(5) LIHEAP is currently able to serve only 15 percent of the 30,000,000 households who are income-eligible for assistance under LIHEAP; and

(6) the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions has jurisdiction over the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981, which provides authority for LIHEAP, and is working towards reauthorizing the Act prior to its expiration in 2004.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that, when the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions reauthorizes the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), the committee should consider increasing the authorization of appropriations under section 2602(b) of that Act (42 U.S.C. 8621(b)) to \$3,400,000,000, in order to better serve the needs of low-income and other eligible households.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, as I understand it, this is the second-degree amendment. Clearly, it will be debated tomorrow when Senator GREGG and Senator KENNEDY return. We will see what the wish of the Senate is. I join with my colleague, Senator BINGAMAN, in stating that I hope we will leave it in this bill. I think the House has done the same. I think it is important that we adopt the LIHEAP bill and that we do it now. Obviously, there is no need for the Senator from New Mexico to debate any further on this issue because the opponents have to be heard from and they won't be here until tomorrow.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, for Senators again, let me repeat that we are awaiting the return of Senator GREGG to debate this issue; that is, the second-degree amendment which was just offered a few moments ago. In the meantime, the entire Energy bill is before us. Amendments would not be in order obviously. We will await their return and then begin the debate. After we finish the debate, we will vote on LIHEAP.

We will also debate the ethanol amendment. We are attempting to work with Senators who have serious issues with reference to ethanol to see if we can't line those up so that we will be ready to proceed in due course and with some degree of dispatch.

Having said that, I don't believe there is going to be any further significant business on this bill. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAFEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE FOR JUNE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in opening the Senate this morning, I spoke generally of the schedule for the next month. There are a number of items that I outlined which we will be addressing.

The first is energy, and we will continue that debate, possibly later today but through tomorrow, the next day, the next day, the next day—through this week. It is a very important debate as we work toward that objective, increasing domestic production, decreasing our dependence on foreign sources, addressing issues such as renewable energy sources that we all know are so important, and accomplishing all that with a lot of attention and focus and care with regard to the environment as well as the economy of this great country.

I mentioned this morning that we have begun, weeks ago—in fact, months ago—addressing the issues surrounding the strengthening of our Medicare Program—strengthening it, preserving it, improving it—and at the same time addressing an issue that seniors feel strongly about, people in Medicare feel strongly about, but also soon-to-be-seniors and that younger generation, and that is to include a new benefit of prescription drugs as part of our health care for seniors program, our Medicare Program.

As I talked to a number of people over the last week, a lot of people said, Why now? There are a lot of reasons why now. The bigger question I have is why didn't we do it 6 months ago or a year ago or 2 years ago. Prescription drugs have become an integral part of health care delivery, of the tools, of the equipment, of the armamentarium

that a physician has, that a nurse has, that health care providers have, to give people security, health security, and especially to give seniors health care security. That is the purpose of our Medicare Program, to give seniors that health care security. Yet we have this very important benefit today—much more important today than 10 years ago or 20 years ago or 30 years ago when Medicare was started—these prescription drugs, which are vital to health care security for seniors.

We will be addressing, 2 weeks from today on the floor of the Senate, for a 2-week period, how to strengthen and improve Medicare. To answer that question, Why address the issue now? I think there are three reasons.

First, I think we have a unique opportunity because the political environment is right. When I say political environment, I mean the responsiveness that we demonstrate to what our constituents want and what they demand and, indeed, what they deserve. Indeed, in terms of the political environment, we have seen the call for prescription drugs, proposals to deliver prescription drugs, enter into a number of campaigns 6 months ago around the United States of America, in the campaign cycles from 2 years ago, and that is simply a reflection of the importance of the issue to the American people.

Second, we have a unique opportunity because, I believe, the legislative stars are aligned at this point in time—unlike last year, unlike 3 years ago, and possibly unlike 2 or 3 years from now. By that I mean that we have a President of the United States who has spoken out boldly and forcefully that this is important to our domestic agenda. In fact, the President put out a framework several months ago demonstrating his commitment and the commitment of this administration to strengthening Medicare, to improving Medicare, and at the same time adding this new and important benefit of prescription drugs.

When I say the legislative stars are aligned, it starts in many ways there because it takes that bold leadership because this will be the single most significant and most expensive change in the history of Medicare, a new benefit at the same time we strengthen and modernize Medicare. But it also takes bold leadership in the House of Representatives and bold leadership on the floor of the Senate. As a physician, as majority leader of the Senate, I have made it very clear that this is a huge priority for the leadership of this body. Indeed, that reflects the leadership in the last Congress where Medicare reform and modernization and prescription drugs were discussed on the floor for 2 or even 3 weeks, but where we were not able to bring to it a conclusion.

Then we have a House of Representatives, as we look at these legislative stars. Indeed, it is lined up. This will be the third Congress, maybe the fourth